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SPECIAL REPORT

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CITY COUNCIL NEEDS STRONG CENTRAL STAFF

March 22, 1984

The new Boston City Council should strengthen its professional central staff. The City's legislative branch needs an expert technical staff for analysis and information on the wide variety of issues that come before it. The Bureau proposes that the existing central staff be reorganized into three distinct groups; Financial Analysis, Policy Review and Office Administration. Central staff assignments should be based on an annual work program which reflects the Mayor's and the Council's legislative priorities. One assistant should be added to the Financial Analysis division as soon as possible. No additional appropriation is required to implement this reorganization since six budgeted positions are still unfilled. Reorganizing the central staff eliminates the need for increasing each Councillor's personal staff allotment.

The City Council's staff consists of eleven central employees and 38 aides in the thirteen Councillor's offices. Personnel expenditures for the City Council staff are expected to total \$858,000 this year. The responsibilities of the central and personal staffs are hard to distinguish. Personal staff members often handle a Councillor's committee work, while central staff members are often involved with individual constituent matters.

#### The Central Staff

The central staff, in addition to the position of Staff Director which is now vacant, consists of five professional and five support positions, with a total annual cost of approximately \$278,000. The Staff Director is responsible for all aspects of running the central staff but cannot hire or fire personnel. All hiring and firing is handled by the Council's Committee on Personnel. The five professionals are: Supervisor of Finance, responsible for financial analysis and budget review; Legislative Director, established in 1983 to assist with legislative drafting and research; Research Director, responsible for general information requests; Liaison of Committees, responsible for administrative support to the various committees and City Messenger, responsible for escorting members of the Council and serving as the Council's "sergeant-at-arms". The five support positions include: one secretary, one receptionist, two administrative assistants and one messenger-clerk.

#### The Personal Staff

Each member, with the exception of the President, receives \$50,000 for personal staff. The Council President receives a staff allowance of \$80,000. The total appropriation for the Council's personal staff is \$580,000 in FY1984 and will be \$680,000 in FY1985. This reflects half year funding for the members who joined the Council midway through the fiscal year. Each member usually hires two or three assistants, although the distribution of the staff allowance is up each member's discretion, with a limit of three assistants. A proposal is now before the Council that would increase each member's staff allowance by \$15,000, a total increase of \$195,000.

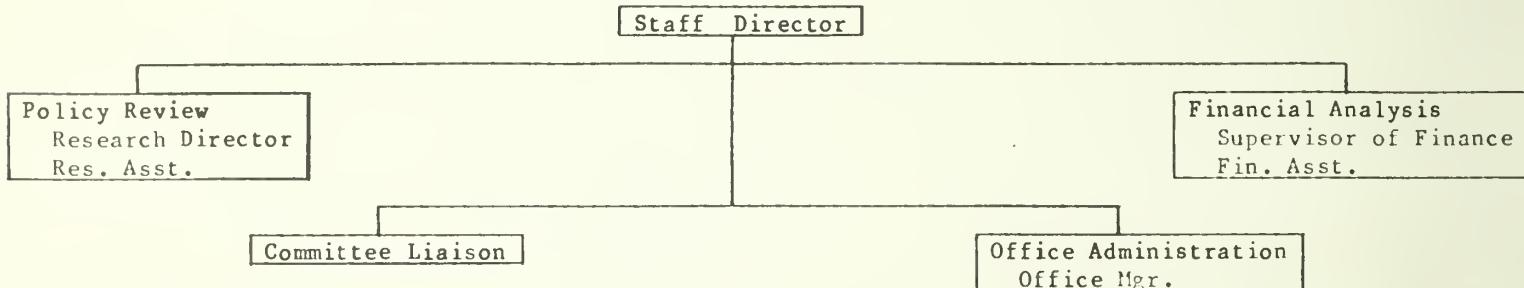
#### Recommendations

To strengthen the City Council's professional staff the Bureau offers the following reorganization plan:

1. The central staff's technical functions should be divided into two sections, Policy Review and Financial Analysis. Policy Review, headed by the Research Director, should service the Council's legislative and non-financial research needs. A Research Assistant, in place of

the present Legislative Director, could handle the Council's legislative analysis and drafting requests while at the same time assisting the Research Director with general research. The Supervisor of Finance, as director of the Financial Analysis division, should also have an assistant. The Financial Assistant should help the Supervisor with requests for financial information while performing revenue forecasting and budget analysis assignments. This is the one new position recommended by the Bureau which should be filled once the new Staff Director is selected. Additional positions should not be filled until the reorganization is complete and the need for them can be documented.

Proposed Central Staff Reorganization Plan



2. The Staff Director should be responsible for the supervision and assignment of all central staff employees. To ensure a professional and depoliticized central staff, hiring and firing decisions by the Committee on Personnel should be made in close consultation with the Staff Director. Central staff job descriptions should reflect the qualifications necessary for competent research and analysis. A new position of Office Manager is needed to coordinate the Office Administration division, assisting the Staff Director with daily management of both the office and the support staff. This can be done at no additional cost by redefining the position of City Messenger.

3. An annual central staff work program should be established by the Council. The program should anticipate the priorities of both the Council and the Mayor. The program should be firm enough to provide staff direction, but flexible enough to allow for unforeseen issues that arise. The Staff Director could then allocate staff time to efficiently service the Council's work program and other issues that arise during the year. Significant deviations from the plan should require the Council's consent. Members of the central staff should not be involved with projects outside the program's guidelines. They should be available to individual members and their staffs on an advisory basis only.

4. In light of projected shortfalls in fiscal year 1984 and beyond, the Bureau does not believe that increasing the personal staff allowance is warranted. The proposal will cost the City an additional \$195,000. Strengthening the central staff will enable the personal staff to concentrate on constituent services, eliminating the need for additional assistants.

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